

Now, we call them first responders because, and I will give a couple of examples. When we turned on our television last spring to the terrifying situation at Columbine High School, who did we see on that television set? It was the first responders that got there first. The firefighters were there first. Whether it is wildfires or earthquakes or tornadoes or fires of unimaginable danger and stress, or when it is a beloved kitten going up a tree or when you need help for a fund-raising in the community, it is these firefighters that are there, they are willing to make the difference, they are willing to give their time and the effort.

We have got 32,000 fire departments in the United States. We have got 103 million first responders. Eighty percent of those first responders are volunteers, volunteers that go and risk their lives to protect lives and safety and support their community. I think they embody the beliefs of the founders of our country who were deeply committed to the idea that the individual had an obligation to the community, that our country needed its domestic defenders, our firefighters, our first responders, every bit as much as it needed a national defense.

Our thanks certainly should go out not only to these firefighters but their loved ones who experienced the tremendous effort, the sacrifice that these firefighters have made for their communities. Stories where firefighters made the difference are in almost every home and every community. They are certainly in my home where the firefighters came to my farm and saved not only property but the lives of a lot of my cattle on that farm. As far as I am concerned, they are the champions we can never fully thank, and speeches like this speech tonight or speeches up in Emmitsburg never are going to be adequate enough to thank those individuals that made that kind of sacrifice.

If there is any lesson that we can take, Mr. Speaker, as Americans from those in our communities that contribute so much, to make sure that we also make an effort to their memory to try to do our duty in helping others, in helping our community, in trying to do something to make our communities better and help the lives of the people that we know a little better, that is what we should do.

NORTH CAROLINA RECOVERS FROM HURRICANE FLOYD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Among all the death, destruction and despair that has been visited upon the people of North Carolina as a result of Hurricane Floyd, there are many bright spots. This evening, I would like to acknowledge some of those who have given of themselves and their resources to this vital cause.

There are many deserving people who have helped North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd. I want to thank President Clinton for adding \$20.3 million in low-income energy assistance funds to his original extended relief package of \$528 million. Thank you, Mr. President. I wish to thank my colleagues, Representatives from the neighboring States, who have banded together to support the victims of this disaster. A special thank you to the director of FEMA, Mr. Witt; and to our governor, Mr. James Hunt, of North Carolina and their staffs for working around the clock to rescue and relieve North Carolina residents.

Some 52,000 citizens have called FEMA now seeking assistance, and Governor Hunt has had to deal with many more. Thank you, Mr. Witt and Governor Hunt, for your dedication to those in need.

I wish to take a minute to thank the Red Cross and the Salvation Army for their special help. The Red Cross opened many shelters. The Salvation Army provided mobile kitchens. And we appreciate the efforts of FEMA to provide meals ready to eat, ice, blankets, water and emergency generators. We also appreciate the hundreds of individuals in local communities, neighbors and citizens who have helped and are helping out continuously. And we appreciate the outpouring of support and resources from across the Nation. Truckloads from Baltimore, busloads from Washington, D.C.; students from North Carolina colleges, churches from far and wide, citizens of every hue, every stripe, every background, all Americans, helping out.

I know of heroic rescue efforts of people, farm animals and pets conducted by neighbors, local fire departments as the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) just mentioned, state police officers and their staffs. I wish to commend them all for their dedicated service.

A ray of sunshine was seen in North Carolina today. Today, October 4, 1999, schools reopened for thousands of North Carolina students. This is a big step forward in the long, painful attempt to return to normalcy after Hurricane Floyd. Tarboro High School in devastated Tarboro opened school today and about 60 percent of the students looked forward to attending school. I am grateful to all who have made the small routine tasks like attending school become a reality after so many days of fear and flooding. I am very grateful for those North Carolina children of our great Nation who strived hard to reestablish their daily routines and attend school today, perhaps under continuing family hardships.

I am very thankful for the county school teachers, principals, and maintenance workers that made reopening schools in North Carolina one of their top priorities. I am appreciative of the State emergency workers who worked with Federal agencies, FEMA, and my

district office staff in Greenville and Norlina, many of them affected by the hurricane themselves but who put the welfare of others first. These public servants have worked long and hard hours to help clean up the communities and find food and shelter for the needy, and worked long hours to keep North Carolina afloat when it looked as though it was sinking.

I am especially thankful for the deep-spirited North Carolina people who have shared with me in letters and phone calls and private visits their willingness to share with their neighbors. Some folks have said they look forward to rebuilding their communities with hard work and the cooperation of others. Even a disaster of this magnitude will not hold North Carolina back.

Again, I sincerely thank all for so much outpouring of goods, donated food, clothes, contributions and, most of all, the volunteerism of time through the local community churches, their congregations in North Carolina and every other State in the United States. All have been terrific. I have never been so proud of my State's people or to be an American as now during this time of crisis.

Most of all, I want to thank all who have helped, for giving us hope to rebuild North Carolina, places like Princeville, Tarboro, Kinston, Goldsboro, Pinetops and Greenville back into the great places they were. Thank you all.

Yet much more help is needed and support. That is why, Mr. Speaker, I intend to join with Members of Congress from other impacted States to try to send a legislative package for further relief to the President for signing. As a part of that package, we need to update the laws so that small farmers and small businesspersons can be treated on an equal footing with other families. We will also need more resources, and that will also be a part of the legislative package.

Tomorrow, we will consider a resolution offering our colleagues an opportunity to go on record as willing to help and provide the necessary resources to make a difference. The people of North Carolina are resilient, and we will bounce back from the situation. But we will need the help of all Americans.

The winds will go, the rain will go, the rivers will crest, the cleanup will begin, and the restoration and rebuilding will take place. The spirit of North Carolina will return, Mr. Speaker, with your help and the help of our Colleagues.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING FUNDING FOR HIV/AIDS RESEARCH, TREATMENT AND PREVENTION IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEASE). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the